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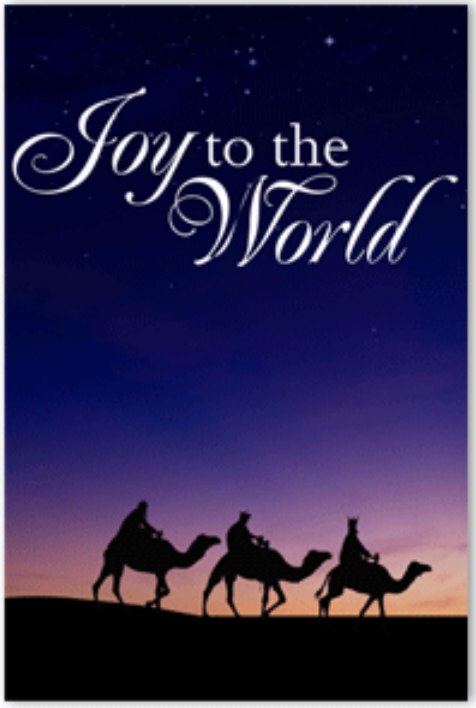
UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

January-February, Volume 7 Issue 1

REFLECTION

January 5, 2022 is Twelfth Night (as in the 12 days of Christmas) and January 6, 2022 is Epiphany (the day of the three Magi or kings). The days are lengthening since the Longest Night and we rejoice in the birth of Jesus as the Light of the World. We muse on the gifts of the magi and their significance – gold: a symbol of kings, frankincense: a perfume representing divinity, and myrrh an anointing and embalming oil that symbolized death. While the commercial world has quickly removed all Christmas decorations from the store shelves and moved on to displaying goods and advertisements for Valentine's Day, let us keep the Light and love of Christmas alive in our hearts.



COVID 19 Update

On Monday, January 3, 2022, the FDA authorized the first COVID-19 vaccine booster dose for American adolescents ages 12 to 15. Besides updating the authorization for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, the agency also shortened the recommended time between a second dose and the booster to 5 months or more, based on new evidence. In addition, a third primary series dose is now authorized for certain immunocompromised children 5 years to 11 years old. Full details can be found in an FDA News Release. The CDC has also released a new statement on COVID-19 isolation and quarantine.

The Omicron variant is spreading faster than the other variants. Recently public health officials have been offering advice on the types of masks. Single-layer cloth masks, which many people prefer for comfort and style, can block larger droplets carrying the virus, but aren't as effective in blocking smaller aerosols or particles carrying the virus. Public health officials say we should change from single layer cloth masks to wearing an N95, KN95, or KF94 mask when in indoor settings around other people with unknown vaccination status. They note that people should wear a 3 -ply surgical mask at the very least. The CDC's guidance on masks includes use of cloth ones that are multilayered and tightly woven, that fit snugly and have an adjustable wire nose bridge. It also suggests layering masks, for example, using a disposable surgical mask underneath a cloth mask.

Along with proper masks, it is important to continue washing our hands with soap frequently (for at least 20 seconds) and maintaining physical distance from people, as well

HEALTH EDUCATIONAL TOPICS:

JANUARY:

National Glaucoma Awareness Month: Nearly three million people ages 40 and older have glaucoma and those numbers are projected to increase steadily as more baby boomers move into retirement. In the initial stages, glaucoma has no symptoms, no noticeable vision loss or pain, which is why it is called the "sneak thief of sight." The only way to find out if you have glaucoma is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

The National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health describes risk factors, types of glaucoma, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and latest research.

Most cases of glaucoma occur in adults but children may also develop glaucoma. Prevent Blindness has declared 2022 as The Year of Children's Vision to raise awareness and education on the specific eye health issues that affect children.

Prevent Blindness offers a dedicated web page providing patients and their caregivers with additional free information about types of glaucoma, diagnosis, and treatment. The American

Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) has a video on how to insert eye drops and a glaucoma vision simulator.

FEBRUARY:

American Heart Month: There are many online resources available related to heart disease, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, stroke. One resource that is very comprehensive is the Million Hearts website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Their theme this year is “Start Small. Live Big.” This campaign inspires adults to get back to living big with small steps. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) offers a program called The Heart Truth which is the first federally-sponsored national health education program designed to raise awareness about heart disease as the leading cause of death in women.

February also has been the signature month for the American Heart Association's Go Red For Women campaign and the message that heart disease is not only a man’s problem.

You are invited to Join NHLBI, The Heart Truth, and organizations around the country on National Wear Red Day which is celebrated each year on the first Friday in February.

In 2022, **National Wear Red Day** will be celebrated on **Friday, February 4th**. Wellness ministries leaders can invite parishioners to wear red hats, ties, scarves, sweaters, etc. on Sunday, February 6th to promote awareness of heart disease.

High blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease, is called “the Silent Disease” because it often has no symptoms. It can be detected and monitored by blood pressure readings. It can occur in children as well as adults. For African-Americans, high blood pressure often develops earlier in life and is usually more severe.

The American Heart Association offers information related to the effects stress can have on your heart health and mental health. It includes three videos to help you stress less.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:
The **Westberg Institute** will be offered March 28-30, 2022, as a virtual conference.

The **Health Ministries Association** has free Digital Media on the website: Building a Healthy Family Part I and II, HMA founders panel discussion, Heart and Soul of Caring Podcasts, and the Faith Community Nursing Educational Video – *The Spirit of Healing – Faith Community Nursing*.

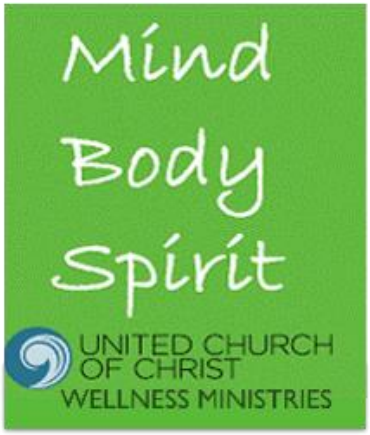
In 2020, 91,799 Americans died from drug overdoses. This was a 31 percent increase over the 2019 rate and the largest year-over-year rate increase on record. The CDC Center for National Health Statistics reported an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States during the 12-month period ending in April 2021.

The UCC Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries encourages local churches to respond and is offering a webinar - **"UCC Substance Use and Overdose Town Hall,"** on Wednesday, Feb. 2, at 6 p.m. ET. Interested people can email Erica Poellot to receive updates or watch the "Events" page at ucc.org for a registration link to be posted. Resources for people who use drugs and people at risk of a drug overdose are also posted.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES UPDATE:

Work continues on the Wellness Ministries Toolkit. Section Two will include exemplars that will provide practical ways of providing aspects of health promotion, pastoral care, and educational programs in local congregations.

Robin Kempster has joined the Leadership Team of UCC Wellness Ministries. Robin has been a Public Health Nurse and received educational preparation in faith community nursing. She was a member of the UCC Mental Health Network and served as its Secretary for 6 years. She developed a Mental Health ministry at her church which is now led by three parishioners. Welcome Robin!



KEEP CONNECTED:

Visit our Facebook and LinkedIn pages: Post comments or share information about your health ministries; join in conversations.

An invitation from the Editor, Alyson Breisch:

- Do you have something you want to share with colleagues?
- Do you have an innovative way you've continued to provide wellness ministries during this past year?

Let us hear about it – you could be featured in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

Contact us, wellnessministries@ucc.org

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